

'IS THERE
A RELIGION
OF NATURE?'

BY
P. N. WAGGETT, M.A.

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LECTURES GIVEN IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

JANUARY 1902

BY

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PREFACE

THESE reports, kindly furnished by Mr. G. E. Hall, are printed in accordance with the wishes of some who heard the lectures, and they are printed with the least possible alteration or addition of words. The temptation to remove repetitions and to strengthen the fabric of the argument has been rejected. In justice to the reader it must be added that I consider a man's responsibility for details is less strict in a case like this than it is with regard to his own written composition deliberately corrected.

The lectures were given last January, at the invitation of the Society of St. Paul; the first and last in the crypt-chapel of St. Paul's Cathedral, the second at St. Martin's, Ludgate Hill.

P. N. W.

13 Dartmouth Street, Westminster
April 1902.

The word 'Naturalist' is used all through these lectures not to indicate one who studies natural history, but one who holds the general view of the world which has been called 'Naturalism.' See pp. 10, 38.

The expression 'Religion of Nature' in the title is intended to refer to Naturalism when proposed as a substitute for Religion in the hitherto accepted sense.

LECTURE I

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN RELIGION AND RELIGION-
OF - NATURE, OR FAITH AND PRACTICAL
NATURALISM

‘ IS THERE A RELIGION OF NATURE ? ’

WHEN I was asked to give this lecture, I thought it might be useful to speak of some special theories of nature and man, from the point of view of natural science ; but I do not think so now. If I speak of anything of a technical character, it will only be by way of illustrating what is of universal and permanent truth, and of practical importance. It is not wise to speak about recent contributions to theory for this reason : that there are some in this audience who know them very well, and some who do not know them at all. Those who do not know them at all might be kept through the whole lecture in wonder what the lecture is about ; and those who know them very well might be occupied in thinking how much better they could themselves state

the technical points. For in the short time at our disposal one could do but little with regard to positive matters of statement, especially for those who do not agree with one beforehand. So I am only going to speak of the general tendency which always, I suppose, exists in human nature—the tendency to think that we might get on better if our religion were what is roughly called more natural.

The word 'natural' suggests, at the outset, a useful expression which has lately come into currency, an expression far better for our purpose than either 'Science' or 'Nature'; I mean the word, 'Naturalism.' This word, first, I think, used in our sense by Mr. Balfour, has come to be accepted as the name of a state of mind and of theory which, although it may not be fully consistent with itself, is nevertheless quite distinguishable from other states of mind. For a state of mind may be distinguishable, though it is not distinct. It can be a real state of mind which we are able to recognise, although it is not able to justify itself in full. Even Religion itself is such a condition. In none of us is Religion a fully thought-out *conception* of life, any more than it is a fully worked-out

government of life ; but nevertheless the state of religion, the condition of a believing man, is a recognisable state in spite of its inconsistency with itself. Naturalism then, in its general notion, is a distinguishable state. Mainly it is this : the claim that what goes roughly by the name of nature—that which is the subject of investigation by natural science—will give us all that we want, and that we ought not to go outside of this ; and that, when we attempt to go outside of it, we fail to reach the truth, and we fail to reach right conduct ; that we act against our own interests when we attempt to go beyond what is dealt with by the procedure of natural inquiry. Naturalism therefore is definitely in conflict with a religion which rests upon revelation.

There are many elements in common between the two points of view—the religious and the naturalistic ; but, as totals, they are different, and even opposite one to the other. For the one says, “ Nature and Science, the independent results of inquiry, are enough ; ” the other says, “ Nature and Science are not enough, either for the guidance of our minds or for the control of our conduct.”

Now what might be the claim of Naturalism

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with regard to Religion, and with regard to a believer's life, if it were put into a formal shape? It might be something like this. We are taught more and more, or rather we see more and more clearly, that Nature left to itself, working mechanically, produces in the end the best results. It produces something which may be called good. There is an elimination of what is not good, a casting-out of what is weak and valueless to the body as a whole, to the whole community which is concerned; and this elimination, if it is allowed to go far enough, will leave us with a result which is better than what we started with. Nature is our guide—let us get back to Nature. Something like that might be the first proposition.

Then, in the second place: If Nature is our guide, it must be wrong to resist Nature.

Thirdly, revelation resists Nature, or the notion of a revelation prompts us to resist Nature. Therefore revelation is the enemy of the true progress of the human race.

There you have the position, as it might be stated formally. Nature is our guide, Nature would leave us no real enemies at the last. It will lead us out as a body, as a social body,

into our true perfection. To resist it is the only sin Science knows about. Revelation teaches us to resist this process. Therefore it is precisely revelation, or the belief in it, which we have to get rid of, in order to secure the rapid progress of human society.

Now let me add a word to limit our discussion. We are not at present more immediately concerned with the contrast between Naturalism and revealed Religion, as they are different views concerning the origin of things. We had that debate out rather fully in the last century. If there is a debate now between Naturalism and Religion, it is not concerned so much with origins; it is not a case of two theories of how the world came to be what it is, pitted against each other. It is rather a conflict of two schemes of conduct, two plans of campaign, two methods in which the world is to be made something different from what it is. We may at any rate for our purpose leave altogether on one side to-night the whole consideration of the conflict of Religion and Science so far as it is a conflict about the present state of the facts. This is an artificial arrangement, but we must accept artificial

arrangements when we have to make use of a very limited time for discussion.

We are to think, then, of Naturalism and the Christian Religion, as they are rival schemes for the conduct of life, rival plans of campaign, rival descriptions of our duty in making the world something different from what it is. And we have to examine the advice of modernism: "Leave life to Nature and things will come out right."

At this point we are obliged to raise a preliminary question. Can we, in this fairly broad sense, resist Nature? Is it possible that Religion can really present a substantial obstacle to the process of evolution—that is, the getting to the best, as judged by the measures of Science, through the process of natural selection? Can Religion interfere with that?

Now you will find it very difficult upon the Naturalistic hypothesis to give any answer to that question. If you say that Religion can resist Nature, it will then appear that there is something in the world—because Religion is in the world—which is not Nature; that there is something which is able to act upon man by some law which is not the law of natural selec-

tion, and not the law of Nature in its broadest conception. How else does it resist Nature? If you say Religion is an active force, then I ask, Why is not that a part of Nature, just as much as the rest of that system of things you are speaking of? Why may I not take in this institution of praise and prayer and thankfulness and sacrifice, and count it at least as much a part of the process of natural improvement as are the hideous social institutions which in certain quarters are allowed to have that character? If cutting off a man's head in extreme cases—and this is far from being an extreme case among tragic and forbidding institutions—if execution as an institution belongs to Nature, and who will deny that it does?—then why is not the practice of prayer, praise, and listening to holy words,—why is not all that a part of Nature too?

Religion must either be a part of Nature or not. If it is a part of Nature, why are you jealous of it (I am speaking to an imaginary Naturalist); why do you wish people to believe less in this system of thought and conduct—in the Ten Commandments, for example—if they are a part of Nature, a part

of a general order by which the best is to be produced?

And if, on the other hand, you say Religion is not a part of Nature, then you are in the situation which we arrived at just now. You are alleging that there exists somehow, either somewhere or nowhere—and if nowhere, then we are landed in the purest idealism, which is the essence of all that is contradictory to Naturalism—there exists some force which is able to affect the progress of men's lives, and which is not Nature—not inside the limits of man's natural constitution.

We are landed therefore at the very outset in a dilemma. Either Religion is part of Nature, and ought to be maintained, or it is not a part of Nature, and therefore Naturalism, as a sufficient theory of existence, falls to the ground. But for my own part I will *grant* that there is a conflict between Naturalism and Religion; and in order to make things pleasanter I will waive the considerable controversial advantage which accrues to me by my admission of the conflict. For if there is a conflict, then there is something beyond Nature, beyond Science. I will waive that advantage; I will allow that there is

something that resists Nature, without urging that this leaves those in an illogical position, who stand for a doctrine which is purely naturalistic. There is nothing illogical in the position as seen from *our* point of view; for the very root of our contention is precisely this—that the procedure of observation according to physical tests does *not* exhaust the sum of the forces which exist in and which work upon the life of man. That is broadly our position; that is the position which it is desired on the part of Naturalism to overthrow. Let us be content to say, then, that there is a conflict between Religion and a naturalistic view of Nature.

Now, what are the heads under which the conflict presents itself to those who believe in the guidance of Nature as sufficient? And here let me say I am speaking of men, serious and earnest, wishing for the best things, wishing for purity, wishing for peace and social order, and who see much in Religion which puzzles them; not of men who are making a stalking-horse of Science in order to promote the worship of impulse—that is an old story with which we are fairly well acquainted; but men who are really in

earnest, and who apparently forget the horrible old thing Nature really is, and seem to be ignorant of what Religion is actually aiming at; still men who, under all this ignorance and forgetfulness, are seriously aiming at a true progress of human nature along lines which would be altogether within the account of Science. Now what would be the heads of such a conflict as it is conceived by such earnest men, as it is conceived indeed by the man that is within each of us at certain times? for there is a 'Naturalist' within us, and he wakes up from time to time with terrible and very paralysing doubts about the real importance of religious limitations of conduct, and of the hopes to which Religion urges us to press on.

The conflict might be described in some such terms as this: Religion teaches us—that is the religion of Christ—to despise the body; Science teaches us that our first duty is the maintenance of the body in perfect health. Religion has regard to the interests of a man's self, a man's soul, and withdraws him by his very earnestness from the general struggle of social life; Science sees the good of the individual in the progress of the community. Religion regards the distant future,

and begs men to be continually giving themselves to a preparation for a far-off Judgment Day, instead of bracing themselves, as Science advises, to create justice to-day on the earth where they stand.

That would be, in the crudest and baldest way, the aspect of the difference to an earnest-minded ‘Naturalist’ who had not well kept pace with the actual life of the Christian body, who would suppose (as has in fact been supposed) that our religion calls upon us to despise the flesh ; that our religion calls upon us to care only for our own interest, and to leave alone the great hurry and the great struggle of Science and of life ; that our religion keeps us in a narrow track, drawing ourselves away from the defilements of this present life, and waiting for an appearing of the Lord, preparing for a future judgment which is quite separate from the life we now live ; while Naturalism, Science, History, Modern Thought, teach us that a man’s fate must depend upon what he does to-day, and that his business is not to trouble himself about a far-off event of which he knows nothing, but to see that he bears himself rightly in the moments as they pass.

Now, with regard to all these points of contrast, we recognise, as soon as we state them, the falseness of the distinctions which are drawn. We see that on our side really lies most of that truth which the Naturalist teaching attempts to revive. Nevertheless we have to admit that Religion, as it is actually preached and actually adopted and actually lived, has given ground for an accusation like that which we have suggested. There have been long stretches in the Church's life when it was imagined that the cause of Christ against the Devil was nothing else but the cause of the soul against the body; that to be religious was to pray in secret and keep oneself from the bustle of actual existence; that Religion had nothing to do with the passing day, but ought to despise it; that when it spoke of things temporal it meant things which are now, whereas in fact the things which are eternal are now and not only in the future. There has been, and there may be again, a so-called religious temper which gives a man a good conscience in his own conceit, if he has thought a great deal on the subject of God, although he has led a whole lifetime without ever having done a hand's turn for

the generation and the people and the country amongst whom and in which it was God’s will to cause him to be born.

We have need to tremble about all that. There is a possibility of having a religion which has this fearful guilt of being without contact with the age in which it was God’s will that we should have our being, and the good works He has prepared for us to walk in. If it had been God’s will that we should be born in the Middle Ages, He had means enough at His disposal to bring us into being at that time. We take a very grave responsibility upon ourselves when we allow the actual age in which we live, the actual men and women with whom we are connected by blood, to become meaningless to us while we give ourselves to a solitary musing upon what we take to be the idea of God.

But the correction of all that mistake lies in the region of Theology. Sermons are wanted to cure that, to give a wider knowledge of what Christianity really is. But this is no part of an actual conflict between Christianity as it really is, and the study of Nature as it really is. It lies within the region of the preacher’s ordinary work to be

perpetually attacking this. It lies within the work of every Christian to be seeking to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, and to find out what His Holy Will is ; above all things to be studying the New Testament, so as to find out what is Christianity.

We do well, I think, in passing, to mention that there is enough to make men outside suppose that this is our attitude, but it belongs to the ordinary course of our Christian instruction and our Christian endeavour to cure that mistake. It does not belong in any special way to our relation towards those who are without. We are false, I mean, not to Nature, when we behave or think like that—we are false to Christ. It is a trouble which lies inside our own body politic, the Church. We must endeavour always as we go along to be reading the Bible in such a way as to find out in it meanings which may fit life as it is actually lived—fit it, I say, not always accept it ; not always support it, but always meet it, if necessary in hard conflict. We must be striving to find in the Divine deposit of truth meanings, such as are there in abundance, which shall come into actual contact with the life and the men that we know.

We must not, on the contrary—as there is a temptation to do—twist and misrepresent the life which actually exists, in order to make it fit our preconceived notion of what the Bible says. It is sadly possible to make extreme views out of the Bible—extreme views concerning poverty and riches, concerning health and sickness, concerning the duties of the State and of the individual—and then, having picked up these extreme views, by a method of interpretation which has not brought to bear upon the Holy words the very experience of life which was meant to draw out their meaning, then to go out from the dark chamber of unilluminated study to force these extreme opinions upon a world which will not tolerate them—I do not mean which will not accept them, for we must expect hostility to the truth; but which has no points by which it can be caught hold of by them and grappled with.

Avoiding this danger, we must live our lives, praying to God for the guidance of His Holy Spirit, and try to find continually in the Word of God that light which may guide us in the world in which, as a matter of fact, we have to do our duty.

So then there is matter of complaint on the

side of natural knowledge, of the way in which Religion is sometimes presented, and in that sense we have need of a more natural religion—a religion which will take account of men's conditions as they really are, of the interests of family life, of the interests and necessities of the State and of Society; a religion which will not suppose that such vast facts as these can be swept away lightly as a mere mistake into which the whole framework of human nature has been allowed to stumble unguided, but will rather take them to be the problem set by Almighty God into which the special application of His solutions has to be read. The other course, the course we are to reject, is like the course of a doctor who, for the sake of a theory of disease, should refuse to see his patients in order that nothing might upset the integrity of his system of medicine.

There is, then, a certain amount of mistake about Religion; and at the same time there is a certain amount of excuse for that mistake. But Religion, as it really is, is clear of the supposed difficulties.

Let us take our three points in succession: The question of the spirit and the body; the question of the individual and the whole; the

question of the present and the future. Or rather, let us concentrate upon the first. For in our age most happily an immense amount of work has been done to show the essentially social character of the Christian life, and most of those present to-day are probably ourselves ardent in that very cause, in the effort to exalt and display the social implications and duties of Christianity. It would be hard indeed if in this great place we were unaware of that work, for it is deeply associated with St. Paul's, and it is conspicuously the teaching of this cathedral which has driven the social view of Christianity deep into our hearts and consciences. To-day, then—and one question will be enough for our hour—I will speak only about the oppression or contempt of the body which Christianity is supposed to teach.

Now our Holy Faith teaches no contempt of the body whatever. In one place our body is called “the body of our humiliation”—the body that serves us for our time of servitude and trial. But, so far is it from being despised, that we are taught in our own religion two things concerning it which raise its dignity far higher than it has ever been conceived by the natural

understanding. We are told, first, about its origin, that it was shaped by God, that God breathed into it the breath of life. We are told about its future, that it is to rise again to an eternal life. And we are told about its course, its history, that it has been and is a shrine of God Himself; that it was the clothing of the spirit of Jesus, who is Himself one with the Father and the Holy Ghost; that in us who are His members, the flesh itself is the temple of that Holy Spirit, by reason of our union with Christ, in whose body the Holy Spirit dwells—in the Head and in the members. The body is fed in the highest action of our religion, even with the Spirit Himself; it is fed by the spiritual food of Christ's body and blood. It is to be guarded with a dignity which has never been awarded it in any other system of thought; just because, in spite of its present infirmities and the evils for which it is the road, although it is not their source, it has itself a heavenly destiny, and is to rise again a spiritual body, to be part of the permanent life of man in the Presence of God. So we can at once sweep away the notion, as of course every one of you has already done in silence when I spoke of it, that there is in true Religion

anything which can in any way be described as contempt or hatred of the body.

But what is there ? There is government of the body. We have been given something which is for the guidance and correction, for the cure and redemption, and for the exercise and use of the body. We have been given a rational principle. And the spirit is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, in order that the body may be guided to its true end, which is to share in the holy purpose of God. It has eternal ends and needs, an eternal principle to lead it now, so that it may at last reach to those ends.

Now, when a man rides a horse he won't let it go the way it would like to go, won't let it go the way instinct leads it, won't let it go by chance ; holds its head, sits it firm, guides it straight, spurs and checks it. Do we say the man hates or despises the horse ; or that he thinks the horse unnecessary or negligible ; or that he can get on as well without the horse as with it ? The horse and the rider make one whole for the time being, and in regard to certain ends. For the purpose of this figure of speech, the horseman is the horse and the man ; and the man does all the guiding. But this does not involve anything like either contempt

or hatred or independence of the horse. So, if we use such language provisionally, the soul, the rational element, has to guide the body, to control it, to feed it with due meat for its necessities, to stop it from eating what it does not want, to check it, never to let it be the guide and always to guide it; and yet, that does not make the body insignificant, worthless, unnecessary. On the contrary, just as the rider has the deepest gratitude for the animal and will give "his kingdom for a horse," so the immortal spirit thinks of the body, and must bend its powers to the training of the body that it may have wherewithal to serve God. It guides, controls, corrects, but is not either independent of it, nor in a position to despise it, far less in a position to hate it.

Now you will say that this is a very imperfect figure. For the soul is not like a rider that sits upon a horse; the soul and the body are only names for different aspects of the one thing which is a man. And I heartily agree with you in that. We must not think permanently, we must only think provisionally, of the soul and body as two living entities, one using the other. They are only two names for the one essentially indivisible life of

man. Let us take it so. Let the rider be practically a part of one animal with the horse; let him be a Centaur. May not we say if he is that, his proper function is to guide and control the rest of himself? If you speak of reason as something separate from your bodily life, you have to say its duty is to control that bodily life which we set in contrast with it. But if you say that reason is only a part, only a function, of that very bodily life, if you take the extreme view that thought itself is a product of the physical process, yet it is *such* a product as to have this for its obvious purpose, to guide the rest—to guide that which produces it. It is either necessary or unnecessary. If it is unnecessary, how did natural selection allow it to survive? (I am speaking now as I must from the Naturalist point of view.) If it is necessary, can it have any function except the function of guiding, checking, controlling? Supposing the engine and the engineer were all one thing, can the engineer have any purpose in the whole, except to *guide* the rest? He certainly cannot drive the screw. If he has not to steer, to check, to let it go and stop it when he wills, it is impossible to assign

to him any function in the mechanical whole of which he forms a part. If you take it the other way, if you distinguish reason from the rest of your being as if it were the rider of a horse, then the horse will never do without the rider; the riderless horse can never win a race. But if he is part of the whole, then he is *that* part of the whole whose duty it is to control and correct the rest.

He is to ride in the horse's interest as well as his own. Indeed it is precisely in controlling the horse—to continue this figure—that he maintains its interest. And so it is in that actual thing at which we are aiming in our figures of speech—the life of body and spirit. He who lives by the spirit, making the spirit ruler, saves body and spirit alike. He who lives after the flesh, letting the flesh be the guide, loses not the soul only, but the flesh also. To live according to the flesh is to drive straight to the death of the flesh, its moral corruption; a death, I mean, which is not the inevitable passage of the flesh through the gates of the grave, but which is the degradation of its character. To live according to the flesh is to drive straight to this death of the flesh, even as to ride *according to the horse*

would be to ride straight to the fall of the horse as well as of the man. There are times of course when the horse needs the light hand which depends upon the firm seat. So there is the light hand upon the body, as well as the firm seat of the authority of the spirit over it. At such times we must go freely, we must guide gently. But all the while, even when we seem to give the horse its head, it is for the purposes of the rider, according to the judgment of the rider ; and when the body has its swing, it must be for the purposes of the spirit. To live according to the spirit is not to live out of the flesh, but to make the flesh live for the purposes of the spirit, informed by Almighty God.

So then our attitude towards the flesh is not one of hostility, nor one of contempt, nor one of subjection. It is one of rule. And of rule of a particular kind, which we in this country, happily, know as that of a constitutional sovereign. Our spirit is to have a constitutional sovereignty over the flesh. That is to say, it is to govern the body without appeal, but it is to govern the body for the body's own lasting interests, and it is to govern it according to its actual constitution and its real needs. And so it is not to starve it and whip it without

need ; it is not to put it into solitude and darkness ; it is not to shroud it from information and knowledge. It is to feed it with meat convenient for the purpose, to guide it, and if necessary to discipline it. It is always necessary indeed ; there is no 'if' about it. It is the work of the spirit to do all this constitutionally—that is to say, in the interest of the body as well as of the spirit, the body finding its interests in the service of the spirit ; and to do this according to the *constitution* of the body—not ignorantly, fanatically, but in correspondence with the actual lawful needs and demands of the body, in a freedom which advances as obedience advances, as the body more and more lives according to the law and purpose of the spirit. So the flesh also shall find increasing vigour, power and quickness in its movements, because this very guiding control to which it is subjected guides it and controls it to its own full career. You must have seen, if you have ever watched a steeplechase, what happens to the horse that drops its rider. It is probably rare for a horse in that condition to engage one fence. It may gallop a bit on the flat ; but the riderless horse is not the better able to run its race for

its freedom. Even so, the ungoverned body is not the swifter and freer. It is precisely the firm seat and the light hand ; the true control, the judgment, the knowledge of what is ahead, which make up the very function of the spirit ; it is these which guide the body to its true interests, to its real life, under the power of Him who is the life of the body as well as of the soul and of the spirit.

So far as we have gone at present, it appears that while there is a conflict between Religion and Naturalism, this conflict is not exactly what I have supposed it to appear to a ‘ Naturalist.’ For Religion is in strong disagreement with Naturalism, not because it despises the present, or the body, or the society which Naturalism honours ; but because it insists in opposition to Naturalism that the true culture of the present or of society is impossible without faith in that which is beyond the world ; and that the body is ruined unless it is governed by the spirit.

Now in what I have been saying, there has been much which it is not worth while to remember. I would advise, if I may, that you should remember this one little point about *the constitutional government of the body by*

the spirit; for I think in these words you have a real thought which is easily remembered and which is worth remembering, and which is a practical guide in our great task of personal reform.

LECTURE II

CAN NATURALISM TAKE THE PLACE OF RELIGION
AS A GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL CONDUCT?

THE piece of work which we are trying to do is a strictly limited one, and I am anxious to make clear the purpose which I have in my own mind. It is very difficult to understand anything at all ; still more difficult to make any one else understand it ; and totally impossible when he is meanwhile trying to understand something different altogether ; for example, the doctrine of Sacraments or of Grace, or the difficulties between Religion and Science. I am not talking of any of these things. I am speaking merely of the inadequacy, trying to get at some explanation of the insufficiency, of the Naturalist doctrine, as a guide either for the life of a single man or for the life of society. Last time we did just this ; we revised our terms. I said, let us speak not of a contrast between Science and Religion, but of a contrast between Naturalism and Christianity. There cannot be a final and absolute contrast between Science and Religion,

because Science is nothing but the effort to describe things as they really are, and of course it cannot possibly be the object of Religion to describe things as they really are not. Obviously these two things in the long run must be trying to come to terms. But Naturalism can be in profound conflict with Religion. What do I mean by Naturalism? Briefly I would define Naturalism as being the attempt to make Science do the work of Religion as well as its own work. There is on that side no tendency to come to terms with us at all—quite the contrary; there is an effort to make the opposition which is between the two modes of thought as bold as possible. And we described the terms of this opposition, as it is proposed to us, in this short way. The three propositions which seem to be set before us are: First, Nature will guide us aright if only we leave Nature to itself and follow it. Secondly, revelation or the pretence of a belief in revelation resists Nature. Thirdly, therefore let us get rid of revelation, and both individual life and social life will improve more rapidly than before.

With regard to the case thus stated, in the first place, I raised a question. I "took an

objection," as they say in court. I said, "*Can* revelation or the supposed existence of a revelation resist Nature?" (Let me say in passing that I heartily believe in revelation—because that is not always understood when one is trying to describe an argument.) Can revelation resist Nature? A revelation or the notion of or trust in revelation is either a part of Nature or it is not. If it is a part of Nature, why should it not be allowed to contribute to the general result as much as hunger or thirst? How can it be described as resisting a whole of which it forms a part? Why is not the Church as legitimate an organ of society, as legitimate an outcome of civilisation, of evolution, as the bank or the railway, or institutions less useful than these? If on the other hand revelation is not a part of Nature, is not a part of the general outcome of evolution, you have given away the whole ground of this system of thought which is called Naturalism; because that proceeds upon the assumption that there is not anything excepting what is the product of evolution. You have given away your whole case, and the question falls to the ground at once. You find yourself saying in opposition to Religion

and the religious view of things, that there exists a power in men's hearts, and acting upon human society, able to affect their lives profoundly, which is not a natural force. That is to say, you describe in the most exact terms Religion itself; and if Religion is *real* it will be impossible to make out that it is unlawful. In order to show it to be unlawful you must show it to be a sham. So I take that preliminary objection, "*Can revelation resist Nature?*" And then you will remember that we waived the argumentative advantage which that gave me. I said, I grant you that Religion does resist Nature, because it really does; and I give you the advantage which that conclusion gives me with regard to the whole theory of Naturalism, which is the theory, of course, that Nature is everything, and that there is no such thing as a force acting upon man which is not a part of his constitution or of the constitution of the world. I chose the alternative that there is a real resistance; and foregoing the consequent advantage, proceeded to criticise the statement of the case; and I got only so far as this in my criticism. There are items, we agreed, of supposed opposition which have no substantial

existence ; that is to say, some of those matters in which a purely Naturalistic view of life supposes itself to be confronted by Religion are not matters in which Religion opposes Science or Naturalism either. We are in particular not committed by Religion to the view that men are to live for the future only and not for the present ; that men are to live for themselves only and not for society ; that men are to live in a state of relentless hostility to their own bodies, and not rather in the position which I described, as a position of constitutional rulership, in which the body is ruled by a superior faculty for its own best good, according to its actual constitution, and with regard to its proper needs. But all that was merely preliminary, merely getting rid of those items of debate which are made much of in recommending a purely material view of human life, but which are not points in which Religion is really opposed, so far as the case has yet been stated, to common-sense. I do not mean to say that there is no more in Religion than common-sense. I do not mean to say that I have given an adequate account of a Christian man's relation to the world and to the flesh, any more than to the devil ; but I have simply

swept away those crude notions that Religion teaches us to hate and to despise the present and to live for the Day of Judgment as if that great Day could be isolated from our present life; that Religion is selfish and unconcerned even with the temporal prosperity of the people round about us.

To-day we proceed to real differences which exist—a real dislocation between Naturalism and Christianity. Now there are characteristics of the Naturalist creed or system which are directly opposed to Christianity, and there are characteristics which are opposed only in a secondary way, as insufficient. That is to say, Christianity sometimes transcends or goes beyond natural knowledge, sometimes contradicts natural error. But before we accept this distinction between those views which are *opposed* to true Religion and those views which only *fall short of* true Religion, let us remember that in Religion and indeed in all practical matters, what is insufficient is practically opposed as soon as it is offered to us as an alternative. Half a loaf is better than no bread, but half a loaf is less than a whole loaf. And if we are asked to take half a loaf *instead* of a whole loaf, we have

not merely an insufficient supply of bread, but we have an attempt at fraud. As soon as a man attempts to make me take half *for* the whole, it is just the same case for me practically as if he were trying to rob me. And accordingly, views drawn from Nature concerning human life, about which I shall presently speak, which are in themselves, and in their own sphere and place true *for their own place*, are religiously nothing but diametrical oppositions to the faith, just so soon as they are offered us as being sufficient, as being an *alternative* for Religion. There is no harm in halves, in having a small supply when you cannot get all ; but there is great harm in being put off with a small supply when you might have all, and when the small supply is represented to be all that there is. In that case there is no substance left in the difference between what is opposed and what is merely insufficient.

Now here are some heads which I have chosen—I won’t say at random—but I have chosen them as they occurred to me just now, and which, being chosen in that way, have all the more value. For they are simply such heads of thought as would occur to any thinking man at once, and do not depend in the least

upon knowledge of the details of scientific controversy as it is at present conducted. I wish specially to avoid that. Now what are the heads which at once occur to us as heads in respect of which Naturalism opposes itself to Christianity?

The first head is that of knowledge. Naturalism—not Science, remember, but Naturalism—is wholly opposed to the notion that there is either any power of knowledge or any news given specially by God. That is to say, it is opposed to the whole notion of a revelation from God, which is different from and beyond what may be discovered by considering God's works. A dispassionate view of God's works will teach us something. What Naturalism opposes is any claim of knowledge founded upon an alleged message from God. There it is in clear diametrical opposition to Religion.

Then with regard to force and working. Naturalism is clearly opposed to any notion or doctrine or belief in a help from God which is different from the ordinary supply of the forces of Nature. That is to say, it is totally opposed to every notion of Grace, to every notion of Sacraments, to every notion of Prayer.

In the third place, Naturalism is, I won't say committed to an opposition to the idea of freedom and choice, but it more and more tends to be stiffened and hardened into an attitude of opposition towards the notion of free-will and actual choice and movement in an individual life.

Fourthly—and here again is a case where the opposition is by no means as yet hardened and stiffened and permanent—the whole trend of Naturalistic thought is against the notion of charity, mutual help, consideration, toleration to the weak, preservation of the helpless in the evolution of the social body. Now that last head belongs to the subject which I have chosen for my last lecture, which will raise the question whether Naturalism will give us a sufficient guide for the conduct of men *in society*. We will leave it out therefore to-day and think of these three heads: the opposition which is between Naturalism and the notion of *news from God*; the opposition which there is between Naturalism and the notion of *help from God*; and the growing tendency to a fixed opposition to the notion of *freedom* in the individual life. Now these three heads will take in a great deal of

the difficulties which are raised in various quarters in the name of common-sense or of Science. For of the various difficulties about belief which take so many different forms, many prove to be at bottom nothing else than a rejection of the very notion that God has ever told us anything at all about Himself or about ourselves. They appear, when they are superficially examined, to be objections to this or that *part* of our belief; but really, when pressed home, it will be found impossible to distinguish the particular part objected to from all the rest of Religion; and the objection will be found to be in substance an objection against the notion that God has disclosed *anything* by way of teaching. Again, the various objections which are taken against the sacramental system of the Church, against miracles as they are recounted in the sacred history, against Providence as it is seen in individual lives, against the practice of prayer for the improvement of character—all these various objections, which are sometimes announced as if they were specially detailed difficulties, calling only for concession at a particular point in order that we might have peace—all these are really based upon a funda-

mental and profound objection to the very notion that God ever puts forth His force, His help, His love in human lives. You see, then, that I am to-day engaged in quite a different sort of work from that to which we sometimes give ourselves. Sometimes our business—the business of those of us who love both Science and Religion—is to try to show that the opposition between Science and Religion is not really so fierce as is generally supposed. I am sometimes sorry to think how much ink has been shed, and how much breath has been used, in trying to show that; for my profound belief now is that instead of our being very much concerned to show that the opposition is unreal, our object ought to be to precipitate a conflict; not, God forbid, between Religion and Science—between two forms of truth—but between Religion and Naturalism. We ought not to be at all anxious to avoid a conflict. This is a practical affair, a matter of force working in men’s hearts; and unless we thus set ourselves strongly upon our own side, we shall be letting the material for the proof of our side be eaten away by the fact that there are not enough Christian lives. While Christian men are busy in showing what is quite

true, namely, that they do not disagree with the teachings of Science, meantime they are neglecting their Christian lives; and the opportunity is going by, and the only material on which we have to argue is getting thinner and thinner, and more and more scarce—not because Christian people are too much opposed to the teachings of natural science, but because Christian people are very greatly too forgetful of the teachings of revelation, and far too slow to take advantage of the powers of grace. We have, therefore, instead of trying to minimise this conflict, to set it out in the clearest terms. We have to say that although within the range of Science, on its own proper level, the notions which come from the study of material objects are valid (while continually growing and changing), yet the doctrine that natural knowledge is *enough* for men is a doctrine which we must oppose by every means in our power. It is a doctrine which a man cannot possibly hold in his heart or mind, and at the same time believe that God Almighty has given us a light to guide us on our way.

What we have to do to-day, therefore, is to set these two things in clear distinction: to

say there is the doctrine that men can know nothing, excepting what they scramble together for themselves out of the dust of the earth; and there is the doctrine diametrically opposed to this, viz. that, besides that knowledge which men have by the study of the objects round about them, God has planted in their hearts in various degrees—rising up to that higher degree in which it is inspiration—a certain information of Himself. And moreover God has given to us in Christ the complete knowledge for our purposes of what He is and desires us to be. There is no truce between these two lines. This illustrates what I mean about an insufficient doctrine being really an opposed one. The doctrines of Science are good on their own line, and we ought to be more grateful to them and not less; but as soon as they are supposed to cover the range of human life, and are offered as a final and sufficient guide for men, they become a rival alternative, and an enemy to the faith in God's message which He has sent down into men's hearts—primarily in the heart of Jesus Christ, where there reigned a full knowledge of God by the co-existence of two natures in His one Person; but also in the men who were instru-

ments of the inspiration which comes really from Him, and which is, by many degrees, linked on to that inward knowledge of God which all men, if they will attend to it, have in their own consciousness.

Now with regard to this matter of truth, I think that we must not forget that there is a punishment for neglecting God in respect of truth, just as much as there is a punishment for neglecting God in respect of conduct. I think that the fearful and dreary notions which men have been allowed to entertain about their own origin and nature are a punishment in the mental sphere, in the sphere of speculation, for not having been willing to have God in their knowledge. We are all perfectly familiar with the notion that if men will not receive God's *help*, they will reap the result of neglecting His help in their *conduct*. That truth we are all familiar with. I do not think we are sufficiently awake to the notion that if a man will neglect God's *light* in his mind, and will turn away from those informations which God is ready to give, there may be a fearful retribution in the region of *thought* and curiosity and knowledge. This matter has been confused by a special circumstance. It

was supposed at one time—I think very rashly—that those who go amiss in speculation and faith had brought this punishment upon themselves by neglecting God’s law of *conduct*. This was too rashly said by believers. There was no proof of this. And there were proofs in the opposite direction, for many of those men who have been most obscured in their faith have been men who put us to shame by the diligence with which they attempted with all their hearts to follow the law of right conduct as well as they could understand it. But in speaking like that, we are setting together two matters which belong to two different planes. In the plane of conduct, the neglect of God’s help for conduct will result in weakness in conduct; but in the sphere of thought, will not the neglect of God’s word naturally lead to a degradation of the powers of speculation themselves? I believe in my heart that the extreme doctrines of Naturalism—the notions for example that men are nothing else at all than members of the great world of animals, not to be distinguished from other animals, excepting by certain accomplishments which they have managed to acquire, which have come to them in the course of evolution

—are the result of such a loss of speculative power. I think that the melancholy and degrading doctrine that we are really, after all, no different from the beasts that perish (an extreme conclusion from the undoubted fact that we are physically in some way or other naturally related to them), is logically strong just because the logic appealed to is fatally confined. I believe that the extreme conclusions against the spiritual nature of man, the attempt to represent man as nothing but one of the higher apes, the showing of man in series with those low and hopeless forms of life, the doctrine concerning the soul, that it is nothing but a delusion, the doctrine concerning man's mental nature, that it is nothing but an effect of his bodily nature—all these unqualified conclusions from physical facts which are in their own region tolerably certain, constitute a Nemesis, a retribution for the mind. Here we see the punishment which a naturalistic scheme of thought receives within itself as a result of the refusal to have God in its knowledge. That sounds a very arbitrary, irrational, over-conservative view nowadays, because, as I have said, we have spent too many years coming cap in hand to Science, for permission to continue to

believe in our own souls. It has become a habit. But if we could throw off that habit and look upon ourselves dispassionately : consider what life is, what thought is, what affection is, what the ties of family are, what the ties between a man and his friends are ; what our feelings of heroism, of religion, of mercy, of charity, of repentance, what these are really like—I say if we will consider these dispassionately, we shall think that the doctrine that all this wonderful world of spiritual life has come up by natural growth out of a life which was *not* spiritual, is a conclusion which is totally impossible to the mind ; and we shall see that the obvious appearance of natural connection which there is between us and those lower forms, the difficulty of drawing a line in the series of evolution, the difficulty of choosing the point at which you will say, ‘ Here natural law stopped, and here came in a spiritual visitation from God ’—these difficulties are difficulties for Science, and not for us. It is difficult indeed, I think, to consider the doctrine of descent, and to consider on the other hand human life as it is. But are you going to ask me to give up human life *which I know*, in return for a doctrine of descent which has been

modified and re-modified three times—to speak of broad and important modifications—not within my lifetime, but within my student-time? Are you going to ask me to give up the solid, inbred, irrefutable knowledge which I have of my own soul and of my mother's soul—of that life of the soul which has flowed between us these forty years? Are you going to ask me to give up that knowledge, because I cannot get it to square with what appears to be the logical outcome of the doctrine of descent as sketched by Darwin? No. If I find these two things won't run evenly to a union—and I acknowledge freely I cannot imagine how to secure the junction; I see the force of the arguments in favour of the origination of animal forms by descent with modification; I see the connection between my soul and my body; I see the strength of the likeness between myself and the lower forms; I see all that; I see clearly the difficulty which all this gives rise to—but the difficulty is not for religion; the difficulty is for the natural scheme of thought. It is for my natural wits, not my faith, to limit the frontiers of the kingdom of natural knowledge. Surely it is not the proper task of religion! We do not get our

religion, like dear Richard Jefferies, from contemplating the iridescence upon our finger nails,—you remember that pretty chapter in one of his books. No, like St. Paul, we can say, "I owe nothing to the flesh that I should live after the flesh." It was not from there that we got our confidence about an inward real spiritual life and access to God, and a hope of future conformity to Him. And those grounds which actually gave rise to our confidence remain exactly where they did. It is the strangest perversion of argument to contend that spiritual certainties have become less certain because natural explanation does not reach them. Lord Kitchener might just as well have ceased to believe there was such a place as Khartoum during the years when he could not get at it.

Formerly we were invited — when I tried to be a student of natural science—to give up spiritual facts because they were explained. Then it was shown that they could not be explained, that the available explanation did not go far enough. And now we are invited to give them up because they cannot be explained. There is indeed an enormous gap between the furthest point to which natural explanation

goes and the most rudimentary condition of real spiritual life; but the existence of that gap is not a difficulty for us as Christians. We shall go on with the two operations of the mental life. We shall still abide in those grounds of confidence in our spiritual nature which were founded of old; and while we are busy with our work of natural explanation if that belongs to us, or while we are looking on at it from outside with a natural and wholesome curiosity, we shall be content to see a vast discontinuity between the two lines of thought. We are not disturbed because the most advanced discoveries of physics in respect of molecular motion—I mean in respect of electricity, or of the Röntgen rays and Hertzian rays—do not reach up to, so as to make a junction with, the lowest forms of movement with which physiology is concerned. We go on with our physiology from its primary *datum* of life; and we go on with our physics, mounting in its highest investigations to the study of mysterious molecular movements; and we know there is an immeasurable distance between the two—the subtlest vibrations disclosed by physics and the lowest exhibition of that life which is studied by physiology. But

this does not prevent the contented cultivation of the two separated fields of knowledge, by men who are waiting for the time when they shall come to be seen as one. And if this be so, how much more shall we go on in comfort and content in the exploration, in the study, and much more, in the *fostering* and in the *exercise* of a spiritual life, although those explanations which we are able to construct out of our best knowledge of phenomena do not nearly arrive at the point of making a junction with the lowest form of that spiritual work. In one word, the discontinuity between natural knowledge and the knowledge which is of the life of the soul in God is no kind of reason for distrusting the latter, and it is even no reason for distrusting the former and the lower kind of knowledge either.

We are obliged, then, to say of Naturalistic doctrine that as soon as it pretends to be a complete account of man it is a most dangerous thing. There is a sense really of indignation when one regards the thinness and inadequacy of the doctrines of anthropology, and of the collections by which these are sometimes illustrated. Facts selected to support a particular view become a caricature of life as it really is.

The limitation is entirely necessary, and in a sense just; but it becomes most unjust as soon as ever the 'developmental series of primates,' or the 'anthropological collection' is taken as an illuminating presentment of the nature of man as man. Some photographs, some dried masks of men, some stuffed skins of the higher apes—do these really help one much? And when you have climbed all the way from the stuffed apes to the poor caricature of a man, have you really jumped the step between the quadrumana and *Homo sapiens*? Does your inspection make the matter seem simple to you? If so, cross the street to the Victoria and Albert Museum, and see what kind of things this higher ape makes; see what kind of doors he puts to his churches; see what kind of cups and knives, to say nothing of pictures and sculptures, he can construct. You will have there within a small compass enough to puff to the winds this silly doctrine—for it is nothing else but a babyish perversion of Science—this babyish doctrine that man is really nothing *more* than a higher ape. As soon as ever it pretends to be a complete account of man, the thing is puerile and accursed. But as long as it keeps within its

own sphere, and so is an effort, a halting effort, going along against great difficulties, to investigate a most obscure department of phenomena, then it is right and praiseworthy. The moment it professes to be a full account of man, as soon as I am told that man differs from the higher apes chiefly in the fact that he maintains the erect posture instead of one that is partly so, then I say the thing is a curse, and a sham, and a fraud. While it merely stops short, there is no harm done, and something is contributed to our knowledge. But stopping short becomes a crime if you are asked to take that short measure as an alternative for the full knowledge. So much then with regard to Naturalism as a creed.

Now we have only a few moments left in which to speak of Naturalism as a scheme of conduct. Here again let us make quite sure that we are in diametrical opposition to Naturalism. There is no room in that theory for the first inkling of the doctrine of Grace, the doctrine that God pours down into men's hearts substantial life from above to make them good, to make them strong. If ever, therefore, in reading valuable treatises with regard to human life from the natural point

of view, which, I repeat, are lawful and good so long as it is understood they are departmental and insufficient—when reading these, you wonder whether you have not found a complete account of man, remember that you have to set against all that is described in the order of nature the smallest spark of grace. We used to be taught as children that “Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.” Well, in the same way Naturalism, as a sufficient account of man, goes all to pieces as soon as you remember the poorest creature on his knees, as soon as you remember how it was with you when you really looked up to God for His help. And since we have but little time left, let me use that time to beg you not to treat grace only as a matter of doctrine which broadly distinguishes religion from everything which is not religion, but to remember it as a supply which is waiting that you may receive it. I must not slide into the manner of one of the sermons which you so often listen to with immense profit, but this point comes into my argument, as an argument. For if Grace be a force, it is obvious that its purpose is not to be thought about, but to be

used; and those cannot hope to stand fast against the most ordinary delusions of this world, who are not themselves opening the channels of their life wide to receive that force in all the fulness with which God will give it to them from time to time. Now here we have a truth which is very strictly in point with regard to some of our most secular debates. I think that a time is coming when there will be a great change in respect to all those matters of debate. I think that it has already come in some circles, and will take possession of the world at large. We shall no longer have a debate with Naturalism concerning origins, concerning the nature of things. We shall have a struggle with it as a force attempting to turn the currents of national life. What used to be materialism in speculation is becoming faster every day materialism in conduct and in politics. Now the change that has taken place in the mental scene is this. Of old—I am speaking now of 1880—when Mr. Huxley wrote constantly to the *Nineteenth Century*, it was consciously or unconsciously allowed that we all had the same data of experience, and the only possible question was about the proper explanation to

be given of these data. It never seems to have entered anybody's head, so far as I remember and know—but you will excuse me for speaking with far too great assurance, mainly for the sake of being short—but I do not think it was prominently put forward at any rate, that it was at least possible that men differed enormously in their spiritual experience, in their experience of life. The great arguments of Mr. Huxley were almost all of them arguments intended to show that our explanation of life was different from his, and was wrong. How if the lives were different; how if we had got hold of different data? And this is what we are seeing more and more clearly now: that men differ not so much as was formerly thought merely in their explanation of the facts before them, but that they differ enormously in the world they have entrance to, in the forces to which they have actual access; so that the differences of explanation, although they are important in their way, are nothing in comparison with the differences of actual experience. It follows that if you do not wish to be a materialist in speculation, if you do not wish to be driven to the naturalistic conclusion in argu-

ment, you must see that you have the materials for a spiritualistic conclusion growing up in your heart. That is the only cure for doubt, to possess material for a refutation of the doctrines of death in the perpetual increase of a flood of active life. “Biters at the fruits of death”—where did I see men thus described? Biters at the fruits of death, the Dead Sea apples—how can *they* rightly describe the laws of life? How can they avoid a materialistic conclusion when they have only materialistic data in their own hearts? Let us think then of Grace, of the life of the spirit in Christ, not as a notion which we are to entertain, but as a force which we are to receive; and let us believe that it rests with us to make the world and society, under God’s grace, yield that affirmative response which we look for. The answer which the human heart desires will never come from waiting and gazing, from turning over and over again the material sources of knowledge. It is not in new discoveries about animals, or in new and fresh wonders of movement, that we have to find that answer; but it is in the region of our own consciousness that the stability of Christian

faith lies. And in that region it belongs to us, not merely to examine what we find there, but to see that what we desire to find may be there to be found. I shall have to leave unsaid for lack of time what I wished to say about the doctrine of free-will and heredity, and I will attempt to combine it next time with what I have to say about Naturalism when it is regarded as a guide for the conduct of society at large.

I shall venture to repeat—and I am sure you will excuse my anxiety to make it clear—that I am not in these lectures attempting to describe or to resolve any difficulties which belong to the relation between Science as such and Religion; but only to indicate differences between Religion and Naturalism, by which word I mean the doctrine that scientific information will do the work of Religion in addition to its own.

LECTURE III

CAN NATURALISM TAKE THE PLACE OF RELIGION
AS A GUIDE FOR SOCIAL PROGRESS?

TAKING along with us the distinction between Science and Naturalism, we may say that there are two regions of morals in which Naturalism comes into conflict with Religion and religious morality. The first is individual conduct, and the second the conduct of society as a whole.

With regard to the first, the doctrines of heredity have actually been found to have a tendency to discredit the conscious effort to improve our own lives. They tend towards a greater belief in necessity as governing our actions, or else towards a readier submission to impulse. With regard to this branch of the subject, as I cannot do much work this evening, I will take the unusual course of referring to a little paper of my own, which expresses in a rough form a part of what I would attempt to say. The paper is called *Science and Conduct*, and is published by

Messrs. Longmans.¹ The general conclusion to which I am led with regard to individual conduct is that the strictest doctrines of heredity, legitimately drawn from natural science, seem to leave us face to face with an excess of different possibilities in individual life ; so that, if only there is an agent within us which can choose, there is abundant material upon which the choice can be made. Nothing, therefore, in the recent additions to our knowledge—and they have been very great indeed—does anything to alter the condition of the old problem, the old mystery, of free-will. So far as that is concerned, the new knowledge leaves us where we were, that is to say, face to face with a problem in which argumentative investigation makes no progress, but with regard to which the moral sense within us bears a clear witness, the witness to the existence of the good—the good in itself and the good for us ; a witness to our being obliged by the deepest interest of our lives to choose the good and reject the evil. Indeed, as I have hinted above, the philosophy of determinism is not what really affects us, but rather the tempta-

¹ *Pusey House Papers*, No. IV., price 6d. Longmans, Green and Co.

tion to yield to impulse, which has no right to call itself the law of our nature, to the exclusion of conscience and of the interest of the neighbour.

We pass on then to-night to some brief discussion of social morals, as they seem to be affected by Naturalism. Here we come to a very plain issue indeed ; but before I attempt any explanation of the matter before us, let me make sure of giving one piece of good advice. Read *Evolution and Ethics*, the Romanes Lecture given by T. H. Huxley in 1893. This, with its breadth of view and exactness of statement, even if its conclusions are not fully what you would desire, is one of the best correctives that could possibly be given to the crude and over-bold Naturalistic statements on public morals which have sometimes been put forth.

The Christian idea of social progress comes into conflict with Naturalism over the question of natural selection. The method of improvement which faith and our own hearts have pointed out to us, has been expressed in the Utilitarian philosophy as aiming at the greatest good of the greatest number. You see that I have chosen as a witness that philosophy

which is generally supposed to give the coldest view of morals. Even in this coldest view we aim as near as possible at the good of all, and that directly.

Our *religious ministry* is the effort to make as many men as we can reach, good and happy—those who are weak and wicked and frail as much as those who are of noble instincts and great moral beauty. Our *education* is by law universal; its object is to alter as much as possible the ignorance of everybody in the direction of knowledge, to instruct, to correct, to enlighten. Our *public health work* has for its object to keep as far as possible everybody alive as long as possible. Our *hospitals* continue day and night to mend the weakly-built frames of the least healthy, to deliver the children of the most ill-nourished and sometimes the most unhappy mothers, to counteract and beat off all the natural effects of hunger and disease and darkness, and overcrowding and vice and past neglect of proper means, to the utmost extent. They work as if the one object of medicine was to preserve the spark of life, even where it burns most dimly, and where in this world it must of necessity

have the narrowest future and the poorest materials upon which to work. Medicine, sanitation, education, literature, politics, religion are all moved by the same great motive—a motive which has its spring undoubtedly, however little that spring may be discerned, in the ineradicable conviction of the priceless value of every single human soul, as such ; a value which, since it is priceless in every case, cannot be practically compared in any two cases.

The universal effort to preserve life, to introduce light, in every individual, has in the course of history met with opposition in two quarters. First, there has been the opposition presented by a one-sided and unpractical spiritualism, which by reason of the very preciousness of an immortal life has regarded its exhibition in time as unimportant. And now in our own days the effort of mercy is opposed by a thorough-going materialism, which in the interests of a physical organism, such as the State is supposed to be, discountenances that universal care for weak, physical individuals which can only be based upon a conviction of their spiritual equivalence to the strong and fair. Such, nevertheless, is

our religious and natural effort—the effort to succour the weak.

What is the contrasted object of a purely Naturalistic development? Natural development finds its guide in natural selection or the struggle for existence; and this requires for its progress precisely the elimination of all those forms of life which cannot maintain themselves according to the order of Nature. The improvement of the whole is not only fostered by the disappearance of the weak, but it absolutely depends for its direction and its velocity upon the velocity and the accuracy with which that disappearance takes place. It is strictly a method of improvement of the whole by the elimination of the weaker parts, and from a Naturalistic point of view, every interference with the law of competition is an act of treason to the cause of progress. Let me make sure that this statement is not given too wide an application. The care of the young who by themselves must perish in every case, is by no means an interference with the law of physical progress, as seen by the barest Naturalism. It is a result of natural selection, or may be represented as such. And

yet even in this very fact may we not see, as Mr. Drummond saw in his book, *The Ascent of Man*, (a book I venture to think of much more scientific value than his earlier work, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*)—may we not see in this very emergence of altruism within the close mesh of natural necessity, a sign that the law of love lies behind, sometimes intrudes into, and may always transcend and modify, the law of Nature, of hunger, and competition itself? In the matter of parentage, the unselfish devotion of the parent to the child is part of the condition under which alone the parent can find a representation in the coming generations. What is immediately a piece of self-sacrifice is, *in the long run*, a part, not exactly of self-preservation, but of self-repetition, and of the preservation of a strain in the species. It is a part of the condition of survival under the law of natural selection. May it not therefore well be, that our own care for the weaker members of our general body, the body of the nation, our own care for weaker races which come into contact with our own, is, even in the view of an *enlightened* natural science, a part of some widest process, of most general and most

permanent self-improvement? But, putting that aside—and indeed the notion needs a jealous examination—we have a clear contradiction between the Christian procedure of succouring the weak, and the Naturalistic counsel of letting the weak perish. According to the Naturalistic view, it is precisely the prodigal for whose return no bridge should be built. If he can himself pass the dark water of unaided reformation, let him thus make good his right to rejoin the company of progress. According to Naturalism, it is precisely the hasty temper, the frail honesty, the moral imbecility, the ungovernable appetite, which ought to be allowed to work themselves out unchecked to their inevitable end, in the isolation, or the lunacy, or the early physical death of the individual. With regard to education, the sources of knowledge ought to be spread open to all; but I suppose that ignorance ought to be allowed to reach its full depth in those who have a tendency to reject knowledge; for nothing but a lowering of the general standard can, it would seem, arise from spending time over forcing up a step or two of the ladder of knowledge all those who will never reach its average middle

point. But in this matter of education, I do not think that Naturalism has as yet made any very definite statement.

With regard to sanitation and medicine, the case is perfectly plain. The interest of the race can only be hindered by the preservation in life of weak individuals, and, above all, by the maintenance of their undesirable offspring. Vice given its full swing will soon reduce to sterility the vicious elements of our society. Alcoholism rapidly wipes out those constitutions which are not able to become immune to it by practice. Only give Nature a free swing, and we should have a society made up of individuals thoroughly able to cope either with the inclination to drink and excess, or else with their evil effects—evil being taken to mean what is hostile to physical vigour. Take another and a still wider view. The doctrine of natural selection taken alone forbids mercy and consideration for the weaker races with which our nation comes in contact. We move as by a law of Nature, as the lemmings move towards the Baltic; there is no room for conscience in considering the fate of those we sweep from the face of the earth; the lower races must needs fade before the higher,

and the higher is simply that which is most fit to eat up the land. As in the interior organisation of a nation, so in the management of its outward movements, everything which interferes with what is boldly called the law of Nature is treason to the true interests of progress. So Naturalism would seem to teach us.

Such then, very partially expressed, is the conflict which may be raised in the name of natural selection; but this is not all which Naturalism has to say. There is another mode of improving the physical soundness of society besides that of the elimination of the unfit; there is care about the production of the fit. This care would take the form of a careful selection in the matter of marriage—if the sacred name of marriage could still be given to an institution which would thus have lost all that personal spontaneity which belongs to its present definition.

Here then are the two branches of the alternative process for social advance, proposed instead of our Christian one of taking the best care we can of each other and ourselves. What can be said in reply? Is there nothing to give us pause before we accept the new plans?

Is there nothing to be said, on the lines which they point out, for our old Christian policy ? Alas, that our answer must be weakened at the outset by the failure to point to a Christian polity in actual existence. It may give us an argumentative advantage to say that the Christian plan ought not to be rejected before it has been seriously tried ; but at what a cost in the region of conscience do we avail ourselves of that advantage in discussion ! It is nevertheless fearfully true that this plan of universal altruism, of the care for the weak by the strong, of the care of the ignorant by the wise, of the care for the bad by those who know the power of grace or who have the advantage of moral strength, of the care for the poor and low national institutions on the part of those national institutions which are powerful and rich, is as yet a dream and an ideal. Only in the region of medicine—the region in which the opposition of Naturalism might be most direct—only here can we point to anything which advances seriously towards the model of the Christian state. Let us thank God for that great exception. On the whole, though, we have to set in contrast with the dream of Naturalism—that dream which

has so powerful an advocate within everybody's selfish breast, and so large a measure of fulfilment in the actual movement of our selfish society—against this dream, if it must still be called a dream, we have to set only a rival dream, an aspiration of Christian altruism.

What has our aspiration, as an aspiration, to show against that other? It has this in the first place to say—that it exists. The mere existence of such an ideal in our breasts is a fact not to be despised. According to the measures of Science, it has to be accounted for like other things. Whence did it come? Here we find in a new form the dilemma which I invited you to consider in the first lecture. This aspiration, this hope, this desire, this sense of the beauty of a care for all, is either natural or non-natural. If it is itself the result of the movement of natural selection, what reason have we to suppose that it is not at least as respectable, and as worthy of obedience, as the natural movement of the mother to save the life—for it is always a rescue—of her helpless infant; the natural movement of the male to spare and protect the muscular feebleness of the wife, who by her muscular feebleness rules his life and his home?

If then the movements of pity and of mercy are planted in us by Nature, they must be planted in us for obedience and not for destruction.

Or will you say they are the mere *vestiges* of a state which is already out of date, and therefore are doomed to disappear, so that it is of advantage to us that they should disappear rapidly rather than slowly ? We have physical vestigial organs, the presence of which points, as it would seem, to a former state of human organisms when those organs were useful. It would be no disadvantage were they now finally to disappear. Shall we say that mercy, pity, and love are such vestigial moral attributes, and that as they are fading, and fading with accelerated velocity in the higher races, we shall be better off when they have faded altogether ? If you can ask this, I will ask in reply whether it is the fact that these motives are weakest in those societies which have, according to your own measure of progress, reached relatively the highest level. And I would ask further how it came to pass that mercy and pity could possibly have been more useful than they are now, in one of those earlier states of society in which the contest for existence must be, if not more actually, yet

much more evidently, acute, than it is in the highly-organised state in which we live—a state in which it is perfectly plain that the crippled musician or the epileptic military commander has a place of importance which he could never have justified physically by the mere contests of muscle and appetite; for indeed neither would have escaped extinction in those earlier societies in which music was a matter of muscular energy, and strategy was confined to the use of a club. So much for the 'vestigial' suggestion. The aspiration must have come from somewhere. If it is not natural it must be extra-natural, and in that case our Naturalism falls as a whole to the ground; for Naturalism—let me repeat it once again—is not the recognition of the forces of Nature, but the allegation that there are no forces besides.

After all, it is perhaps in the genuine answer to this dilemma that our principal defence lies. This movement of pity and mercy belongs, we have to say, to the very perfection of our nature. It is indeed the best thing we have. How can we give it up on the plea of making the whole society better? Is the whole society worth preserving at the cost of the pity and mercy of each one of us? Nay, is the whole

society worth preserving if it has not pity and mercy within itself to be preserved? And how can *that* be rich in mercy and pity which has found its perfection through the rejection of those motives, which flourishes just in proportion as mercy and pity have been inoperative? In fact we come back to the old truth that the moral sense, if it be not *supreme*, is nothing at all; that supremacy belongs to its nature, and that if we are without the moral sense, we may as well put aside all problems, all care, all attempted direction of our life, whether as individuals or as a community. To put it briefly, if the moral sense is a reality, we cannot discard from it the element of pity; and if the moral sense is a delusion it is impossible to say why we should endeavour to preserve or to develop society. What business is it of ours if it goes to pieces? In fact the plea for ‘nature’ proves nothing at all, or it proves a great deal too much. It proves that in any genuine sense of the word ‘interest,’ any sense having reference to consciousness, we have no real interest at all in the preservation of our race; and if it perishes from the preservation of the weak and the debased, that is no affair of ours. Take the

other side, and see how far it is from this infertility of conclusion. Take it that we owe an entire reverence to the dictates of love; that the moral sense by its very existence is not only existent, but also necessarily sovereign; that it is indeed the witness within us to the better order of which at present we form an imperfect part. Let it rule and have its own. It will be able to take all advantage of the teachings of physical knowledge, without submitting itself to merely physical limitations. To be a sovereign is not to be without servants, or to fail to use their powers to the utmost. Christianity rightly asserting itself will use Science as medicine uses it, to relieve pain wherever pain exists, to drive off evil, whether in the physical sphere or in the spiritual. It will frankly recognise all goodness of health, of cleanness, of fresh air; it will not pause to question whether these things are or are not really superior to their opposites; it will trust its instinct and take all that for granted. It will thank God for the perfume of flowers, and attempt to bring the pure joys even of sense within the reach of the disinherited. It will seek to open the sources of knowledge to all; but it will seek to introduce into the darkest

mind the small supply for which alone it has capacity. It will trust to the training of the individual for the enlargement of capacity, and not to the mechanical elimination of the small. It will hope for swifter harvests than may be reached by the slow advance effected through the destruction of generations. Within society it will believe in the possibility of the direct action of the moral environment, and it has, as I could show if there were time, abundant ground, according to the tests of natural science, for retaining this belief.

Time may perhaps serve for a short exhibition of the grounds of that conviction. It is of necessity addressed chiefly to those who happen to be conversant with the literature of evolutionary doctrine. In the individual life-history there is little, if any, ground for believing in the inheritance of characters acquired within the lifetime of an individual. Here it is plain, that I dismiss in a sentence a very large body of alleged facts and of doctrine. Take it provisionally that in the life of an animal or a man, we have no proof of the inheritance of acquired characters. If this be so, natural selection, and natural selection alone, is the guiding factor of evolution—the *guiding* factor,

I say, not the only *motive* factor. Use-inheritance (a useful name invented by Mr. Ball Platt), the direct effect of the environment, the Lamarckian factors under whatever name they re-appear, must be considered as at the very least without proof at present. But does this hold good of society as an organism? Not at all. Indeed it is because of the discrepancy in this respect that we may feel sure that the very notion of society as an organism is at present in an altogether unsatisfactory state. It requires examination from top to toe, and if it were revised in no other respect, it must at least be revised in this. For in society as a whole there is a most obvious and undeniable inheritance of acquired character. We have ourselves inherited from the Roman State (a social organism which has passed away) a number of the most important social characteristics of our national life. The whole of the modern European societies have inherited in immensely various degrees parts of the Roman municipal law, which are vigorously active as factors of national life to this day. From the extinct England of before the Conquest we have a not less important inheritance wrought into the substance of our social life; nor are we yet

bereft of some of those activities and functions which our partly Christian society has inherited from the once undivided Church. The truth is that there exists in society as an organism a bond, a road of connexion, a *nexus* as the phrase runs, apart from the *nexus* of which physiology takes account. In physiology there may probably be no inheritance of acquired characters ; in sociology it is certain that there is, through the connecting link of institutions. Institutions, if we give that name its widest meaning, compose a vast system of continuous mental life, comparable to the continuous life which Weismann divines as the basis of animal existence, and very much more important as controlling the actual form of a social policy. Now in this difference with respect to the inheritance of the acquired is a fact which entirely upsets the smooth level analogy between the animal and society which is too easily taken for granted. It is not, however, my present task to criticise the conception of society as an organism, but to affirm the possibility of directly influencing its life ; for this is the charter of morals and of religion. But supposing for a moment we were wrong

in this ; supposing a further knowledge should show the inheritance of acquired characters to be as little a truth in society as it is in physical life ; will the case for morals and Religion be *practically*—I do not say ideally, but practically—weaker ? For my part I do not think so at all. Of two things, one. Either moral improvements are inherited together with moral disadvantages, or else neither improvement nor advantage is inherited at all. If they are inherited, this gives us a new motive for taking care that in the individual life and in the generation with which we are immediately concerned, there shall be the greatest possible moral good, and the smallest possible disadvantage to be handed on. If, on the contrary, moral good is not inherited, then moral disadvantage is not inherited either, and each generation has a clean slate on which to write down what is good and to leave out what is bad. In either case the hope and the task of morals and religion remain unquestionable, and bereft of no measure of hope by any addition to or modification of our knowledge of development.

I will not attempt any more to-night. I

shall be very grateful if these words have done anything to stimulate a greater interest in the wonderful advance of modern Science, anything to reassure my brothers in their reliance upon Christian truth, and their vigorous exercise of the life of Grace.

THE END

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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